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# Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

FRIDAY, April 16, 1943

SUBJECT: "HOUSECLEANING IN WARTIME, "Information from electrification engineers and extension workers of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

This is the time of year when Grandmother, a determined look in her eye, a towel around her head, and a collection of brooms and mops in hand, used to turn the house upside down with her spring housecleaning.

That's how women used to do it a long time ago. But for years now they have known better...have given up those half-yearly upheavals in favor of year 'round cleaning. Grandmother took her cleaning in great gulps spring and fall but her grand-daughters take it in small regular doses, a little at a time. It's easier and pleasanter this way, and more effective. With a little cleaning going on regularly every day...every week...every month, the house never gets really dirty. It stays clean-- "always ready for company."

System and regularity have been the secret of success. The cleaning schedule of the well-run modern home might be something like this:

Every day--dust every room. Dust window sills, furniture and finally floors. Clean rugs. Wipe woodwork.

Every week--more dusting. Dust pictures and mirrors, light bulbs and fixtures, closet floors, backs of furniture, baseboards.

Every month--brush walls and drapery, wash windows, mirrors, and pictures.

That's how good housekeepers used to do their cleaning...before the war. But as one woman said lately, "In wartime I have more important things to do than spending my days disturbing dust. "In peacetime many women could devote several hours or even half of every day to cleaning, polishing, straightening. Now Keeping the house spic and span and neat as a pin may not be the important way to spend



time...may be impossible with the pressure of war work of one sort or another. Today many women must let housekeeping play second fiddle to the swing shift...the victory garden...and the hayfield. The country needs women for war work of many kinds. Women must change their housekeeping to suit the times.

Just recently a number of women in different States, all of them women who carried on war work along with the work of caring for a home and family, reported on ways they now used to save time around the house.

Most of these women still were of the opinion that regular cleaning in small doses was easier than spending 2 weeks every spring and fall overhauling the house. But they managed so that their regular cleaning took less time than before the war.

One woman reported that now a days she cleans a room at a time. She washes curtains, dusts and cleans floors and rugs every day but in only one room so the whole house gets cleaned once a week. Rugs getting the most use she cleans twice a week. She also reported saving a great deal of cleaning time by keeping linoleum and floors waxed.

Another woman reported saving time by dusting every week instead of every day. The heavy housecleaning she saved to do in winter when she had more time.

Shelves and storage cupboards got honorable mention by all these housewives as time and work savers...great aids in keeping the house clean and in order. One woman said that magazines used to clutter her house...gather dust....require moving every cleaning day. Now she has shelves in a store room where all the magazines she wants to save have an orderly place.

Several of these housewives reported saving a great deal of dusting by putting away for the duration knickknacks and other useless articles. Other women with large houses closed unnecessary rooms to save cleaning.

One wise woman suggested that in these busy times with so much for everyone to do a housewife must know her physical limitations and stop before she is too





tired.

A few honest women confessed saving a great deal by giving up "puttering"--by doing their cleaning with purpose and system rather than by aimlessly dabbing at this and that. Others said they concentrated on the important jobs...and resisted the temptation to spend time on unimportant things. In other words, they decide which jobs are "must," and which are "perhaps," and stick to the "musts."

Keeping all household equipment in good order--keeping it clean...well-oiled...all screws tight...and everything ready to go--this is another saving way, according to most of these housewives. They also keep their equipment where they can use it easily.

Your vacuum cleaner is such a useful piece of cleaning equipment. It will repay you in cleaning efficiency if you take great care of it. Pick up bits of glass pins, hairpins, tacks or anything sharp on the floor before you run the cleaner. Otherwise you may damage the fan or puncture the bag. Keep the brush of the cleaner free from hairs and threads. See that the belt which turns the brush is tight enough to prevent slipping. Empty the bag after every use. Occasionally turn the bag wrong side out and brush it. Get into the habit of using the attachments to your cleaner regularly. Attachments, properly used, can save you a lot of time in cleaning.

You are welcome to a free folder called "Care and Use of Your Vacuum Cleaner." Write to rural electrification engineers of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. for it.

